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Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Judiciary Committee

April 4, 2011

Additional Testimony in Support of
HB 6557 AAC Liability For The Recreational Use Of Lands

Attached is the original testimony of 6 Connecticut residents in support of HB 6557 as received by the Sierra Club on April 4 for submission to the Committee. It is submitted unedited, but printed together in order to save paper.

Marianne Corona, Middlefield
Henry Link, Hartford
Peter McKnight, Fairfield
Bob Simms, Greenwich
Angela Capinera, Stratford
George Stone, West Hartford

Because of the economic climate many town political leaders are seeking ways to increase their tax base, which is understandable given the economy. Because of this need to increase tax revenues these leaders can be and often are motivated to view open space and portions of recreational lands as great development opportunities. The greater risk factor of law suits with the good possibilities of huge law suit settlements, with associated increased insurance costs along with attached deductibles (funds which come from the town budgets) offers these folks additional ammunition to make the case for the conversion of open space and recreational areas in to what town administrators think of as "profit making."

It is also reasonable to assume that with the increasing insurance and deductible costs the public could face the closing of some of these areas.

Marianne Corona

Vice chairman, Middlefield Inland Wetlands Commission

CACIWC Board of Directors, Middlesex County Representative

245 Cherry Hill Road

Middlefield, CT 06455

Since I grew up & also live in Hartford now, I have enjoyed walking or skiing on the MDC lands for years with family or friends for sustaining a physical & mental health quality of life. It is important to have continued access to this land.

Henry Link

Hartford, Ct

I urge support for H.B. 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands.

I worry that towns and others will close down open spaces out of fear of lawsuits.

I hike several times a week on public opens spaces and consider it essential to my spiritual fullfillment.

The towns must be protected and the legislature must act. The time is now.

Peter McKnight

59 Robin Lane

Fairfield, CT 06824

Why it is important to be able to continue to enjoy access to our forests, meadows, trails, parks, and rivers. Why is hiking, walking, biking, canoeing important to the quality of life (and health).

These activities are important for physical and mental health. And, when I hike, bike, walk, or swim, I feel great, and this greater happiness is contagious! I believe that people are a part of Nature, and when we separate ourselves from the natural world, we lose something sacred; we lose an appreciation for our great gift, and our great responsibility. I believe having a respect and love for our fellow creatures, and for our Mother Earth, involves the responsibility of care, and that the appreciation that leads to respect and love is close to grace.

Bob Simms

3 Quarry Knoll

Greenwich, CT 06830

Regarding access to municipal open space and land trusts: I live in Stratford, CT and due to the high population density in the area, the only real open space are the municipality owned open space and land trusts. If it were not for these, there would be no access to open space and recreational areas. Just yesterday, I went with a small group led by a Master Conservationist on a walk bordering the Far Mill River in Stratford. We had to cross over into Shelton for part of it due to the geographic location of the river. If either of these municipalities blocked access due to liability concerns, we would not have been able to walk the river. Please protect the municipalities from liability on open space and land trusts. Otherwise, pavement is the only thing people will be able to hike on. Thank you.

Angela Capinera

11 Cardinal Place

Stratford, CT 06614

Living in West Hartford near the MDC reservoir, my wife and I have enjoyed hiking in the MDC reservoir and around its various lakes and trails. It's one of the gifts we enjoy as relatively new West Hartford residents. Nearly all of our visitors, friends, family and especially, grandchildren, always go on a walk with us in the reservoir on visits to us. We think such places are especially important as we educate our grandchildren about the forests and waters which surround us and to have them learn about the animals, birds, flowers and trees and how we interact with nature.

Since my back surgery two years ago (almost to the day, April 9th), I have been unable to play golf, tennis or go canoeing; but the availability of parks and places like the MDC reservoir near my home have become an important part of my health care, as by my back surgeon has advised me to walk a lot. Of course, it's also good for my general health, too, and a great feeling to be out in nature.

So I urge the legislature to help keep these places available to all of us in Connecticut, and to our visitors, as well.

George Stone

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